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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: ALEKSEYEVA DECRIES EVENTS IN INGUSHETIYA, SLAMS  
GOR AS UNDEMOCRATIC

REF: MOSCOW 2371

Classified By: Ambassador John Beyrle; reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: Moscow Helsinki Group Chairperson Lyudmila Alekseyeva described to Ambassador on September 30 her conclusions from a recent fact-finding trip to Ingushetiya. She said that special forces there -- possibly on orders from Moscow -- routinely take people from the street and torture detainees. Alekseyeva disagreed with the Ingushetiya government's claims that it is detaining suspected terrorists, and also rejected the official account of the death of independent Ingush journalist Magomed Yevloyev. She feared that Ingushetiya could become a "new Chechnya" if it continued on its current path. She also slammed the GOR as undemocratic and called the proposed cooperation between the GOR and SPS the "final cleansing" of a democratic opposition. However, she ended on a positive note, indicating that under Medvedev Russia still has the potential to develop civil society. End Summary.

Torture in Ingushetiya  
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2. (C) On September 30, Moscow Helsinki Group Chairperson Lyudmila Alekseyeva told Ambassador that the current "atmosphere of fear" in Ingushetiya reminds her of Stalin's time. On a recent fact-finding trip there, Alekseyeva learned that local forces currently take three people per week from the street and detain them, often abusing and torturing detainees. In one instance, authorities detained a member of the Mashr human rights group for four hours, and he emerged with a broken arm and leg, as well as a heavy concussion and damaged kidneys.

3. (C) Alekseyeva described how she visited a home surrounded by tanks and masked, heavily armed police. She showed her credentials, including permission from the offices of both Ingushetiya's president Murat Zyazikov and its Ombudsman Karim-Sultan Kokurkhayev, but they barred her from entering. She told the Ambassador that she considered this proof that "they knew what they were doing was illegal," and she subsequently learned that these same police had visited the house four times looking for a young man, and had robbed the house each time. She added that she could tell from their accents that the police were from Moscow, and that the commander told her. "My president is Medvedev," implying that he took orders from Moscow, and not from anyone in Ingushetiya.

4. (C) Alekseyeva said that authorities attribute this crackdown to the need to control spreading violence, "underground weapons," and threats to authorities. However, she insisted that they are detaining peaceful people, and that the Ingush population as a whole is not interested in violence. (Note: She contrasted the Ingush with the more "warlike" Chechens, and alluded to a 2007 internal Ministry of Interior letter anonymously passed to her which drew the

same contrast.) Ingushetiya is a "small, poor republic" not capable of producing a significant secessionist movement. Alekseyeva said that of the 186 young Ingush men recently detained, only 21 of them are suspected of terrorism, and she doubted that even they harbor terrorist designs.

#### Suspicious on Yevloyev Killing

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15. (C) Alekseyeva did not believe the official account of the death of Ingush journalist Magomed Yevloyev (reftel), in which authorities detained and "accidentally" shot him after he reportedly argued with President Zyazikov. (Note: Alekseyeva said in a September 22 press conference in Moscow that "not a single one" of the people whom she met in Ingushetiya believed that the killing was accidental. By contrast, on September 25, human rights activist and Public Chamber member Aleskandr Brod adhered to the official version of the incident that Yevloyev was involved in a scuffle with police while in the backseat of the vehicle. End Note). According to Alekseyeva, Yevloyev had been investigating corruption among local officials, and had received warnings that his life was in danger.

#### "A New Chechnya?"

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16. (C) While the Ingush authorities pay lip service to their respect for protest movements, Alekseyeva said that it is clear authorities are resorting to violence to compensate for their increasing lack of control. Contrasting Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov with Zyazikov, she called the former "a satrap and a bandit" who is useful to Moscow, while the latter is less sinister but is a "spineless creature." Kadyrov, she said, succeeded in pacifying Chechnya because of Chechen people's war fatigue (elsewhere she has called Chechnya's relative quiet "the quiet of the graveyard"). In the September 22 press conference, she said that Ingushetiya has the potential to become "a new Chechnya" if it continues down its current path, but that as long as some civil society still exists and the lines of communication between the government remain open, there is still reason to hope. Alekseyeva told the Ambassador that Zyazikov and his advisors granted her a three-hour meeting during her visit.

#### SPS and the Kremlin - "the Final Cleansing" of the Democrats?

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17. (C) Asked by the Ambassador about the recent initiative to increase cooperation between the Union of Right Forces (SPS) and the Kremlin, Alekseyeva called this "the final cleansing of an independent party." She said that the GOR "destroyed political life in the country," and that their hypocrisy in defending the "right to protest" resembles that of past Soviet governments. United Russia, she said, is "a corporation of businessmen and bureaucrats." As for the opposition movement Other Russia, she said that she had left their fold in January because she felt that its leaders were more concerned with their own popularity than with the people's needs. She lamented the lack of a "political culture" in Russia, wherein people negotiate, compromise, and balance interests. She said that she learned about this process during her exile in the U.S. in the 1970s-80s, and that the West continues to play an important role in educating Russians in this fashion. However, she fears that in its current form, Russia could easily slide into fascism.

#### Hope for Civil Society in Russia and Improved Bilateral Relations

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18. (C) Nonetheless, Alekseyeva said that she sees signs that point to a more hopeful view for the future of Russia's civil society. For example, recently she met with some Siberian farmers who, despite their rural background, knew exactly how to express their interests and how the judicial system should work to defend people's needs. She said their discussion "sounded like Mozart" to her, and said it showed that if the

government allows rule of law to prevail as Medvedev has promised to do the results will be visible. She also said that despite her skepticism, Medvedev has impressed her with his humility and sincerity.

¶9. (C) Alekseyeva asserted that the GOR "realizes it has gone too far" with its recent actions and defiance of the West, that it "does not need a (new) Cold War," and that she expects to see compensatory gestures aimed at easing bilateral tensions. She acknowledged recent anti-American rhetoric, but believed the GOR will approach the upcoming change of U.S. administration with an open mind. She added that recent global economic woes, felt keenly in Russia, will also influence the GOR to be more conciliatory. She and the Ambassador agreed that now is a crucial time for our bilateral relationship, in light of our shared "global responsibility."

Comment  
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¶10. (C) Alekseyeva has long been a giant among dissidents -- first in the Soviet Union and now in Russia -- and is the undisputed doyenne of the Russian human rights community. Her positive feelings toward the West were forged during the Cold War years of samizdat and Voice of America, and culminated in exile in the U.S. from 1977 to 1993. However, at 81 years old and less active than before, she is seeing a new generation of activists supplant her role. Some of these newer human rights figures remain staunchly pro-American, but others appear more apt to support the GOR in its current disagreements with USG policy. In a recent meeting, Brod handed us a book with lurid pictures of "Georgian human rights abuses in South Ossetia." This trend among human rights activists bears watching.

BEYRLE